

UTILIZATION OF A MOBILE RESOURCE FOR COMMUNITY RESTORATION EFFORTS

Presented by Cinergy Corp., Cincinnati, OH

The Situation: On September 20, 2002, a violent tornado swept through central Indiana, knocking out virtually all the power and communication systems in the region. One of the cities most heavily hit was Martinsville. Indianapolis Power and Light alone reported 60,000 residents were without electricity, as a state of emergency was declared and damage estimates for the city spiraled towards \$36 million.

The Indiana Red Cross was activated to aid an estimated 3825 families displaced by the storms while public safety, public service and emergency responders grappled with the enormity of the disaster. As vexing as the loss of power, was the inability of responders to talk, interoperate and coordinate rescue and restoration efforts due to the communications knock-out.

The Solution: Cinergy Corporation, a gas and electric utility company serving 2 million customers in Indiana, Ohio and northern Kentucky, heard about the catastrophe and acted quickly to aid its neighboring community. In the collaborative and civic spirit the company is known for, Cinergy partnered with Hamilton County, Ohio, to quickly outfit and dispatch a mobile communications trailer to the devastated area.

The trailer functioned as a "portable dispatch center" utilizing an 800 MHz radio communications system. According to Bob Stout, Radio Replacement Director for Cinergy, "the 800 MHz was the *only* system working in the entire area". Cinergy optimized their existing technology to aid in the recovery and restoration efforts, programming 150 radios to the same local public safety channels for three to four different locations. This meant that multiple agencies and responders could finally communicate together to coordinate efforts.

The Result: A number of public safety agencies depended upon Cinergy's mobile communications center as their main link for communications in the critical days after the tornado. Without it, interoperability among law enforcement, fire, emergency services and other agencies would not have been possible and the critical rescue, recovery and restoration of the community would not have proceeded as swiftly and efficiently as it did.

Not only were these agencies able to work together to aid the community, the Red Cross was readily equipped to help injured citizens and displaced families. This was of considerable importance given the devastating aftermath of the tornado.

In honor of their extraordinary efforts to assist the community, Cinergy Corp won an award from the Indiana Red Cross. Additionally, the City of Martinsville and Hendricks presented this quick-thinking utility with awards for their efforts to assist their community in a crisis.

The innovative use of Cinergy's utility company's dispatch trailer, reprogrammed for 150 radios for public safety responders, was the vital communications link for the many agencies and the Indiana community whose lives depended on it. During a disaster of this magnitude, Cinergy's hard work and service made a significant difference – to the responders, the public safety agencies, the rescue and aid groups, and the displaced residents of the county.